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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON AMBASSADOR HULL'S ARTICLE ON  
IRAQ

1. SUMMARY: On July 2, an opinion article on Iraq by Ambassador Edmund Hull, entitled "Toward a Free Iraq: Security, Economic, Political Efforts on Track" was widely distributed to the Yemeni press. Out of about 29 newspapers, six independent papers published the article plus the al-Sahwa.net website. At least four papers reacted to the article, saying it did not change the minds of Yemenis about what is happening in Iraq. End Summary

2. Commenting on the article, "Annas" independent weekly (of Islamic orientation), published an article July 7 entitled "Forget it Mr. Hull." The paper commented that "Mr. Hull wrote the article as if he were an Arab ambassador for quoting President Bush as Arab ambassadors usually do when they quote their leaders." Annas indicated that the Yemeni people will not believe what the Ambassador is saying that all efforts made by the Americans in Iraq will serve to improve the lives of the Iraqi people "even if he (the Ambassador) writes a thousand articles a day." The paper stressed that Yemenis are not concerned about the future of the people of Iraq "as much as they are concerned about the US Ambassador's movements and activities in Yemen which only God knows where they will lead."

3. Al-Sahwa weekly, mouthpiece of the Yemeni Congregation for Reform (Islah party), indicated that the U.S. image in the eighties of last century was that of a country helping and supporting poor nations. "America's image now" the paper added "is that of a haughty President; of a frowning politician; of a soldier armed with fear and might and ready to strike and kill; and of disreputable informers - all of which do not convey the message of justice and truth." The paper indicated that the "atrocious pictures Yemenis see on TV everyday of what the Americans are doing in Iraq and Afghanistan are more truthful than what the U.S. Ambassador is trying to tell us."

4. The anti-American (putatively independent) weekly "al-Shumu'" commented that it was not very diplomatic for Ambassador Hull to portray the "reckless" American practices in Iraq as something "grand". The paper added that the article's message was not "very persuasive" since it clashes with Yemenis' convictions about what is happening on the ground in Iraq. Al-Shumu' concluded that the U.S. Administration has lost credibility in the world for following a "Hollywood-like thinking."

5. "Al-Ihya'a al-Arabi" (mouthpiece of the Socialist Nationalist Ba'athist party, extremely anti-American) described the circulation of the US Ambassador's article in the Yemeni press as "a silly move". It reported that if "the Ambassador knew how much the Yemeni people hate the pro-Zionist US administrations, he wouldn't send the article." The paper criticized the newspapers that published the article and commended the ones that did not.

6. COMMENT: This is the first time that we have been able to place an article on Iraq in so many Yemeni newspapers, despite our continued and insistent attempts. The reaction it has produced is not very surprising because the mood here on Iraq is still anti-coalition. Following on the heels of this placement, we have devised a plan to continue to seek a more balanced reporting by the Yemeni press (see septel).  
HULL